



Westlake Board of Education

Board Notes from Monday, July 11, 2016, Special Meeting

VISION STATEMENT

The Westlake City School District will provide a dynamic, student-centered, 21st Century learning environment. Our district will be characterized by high achievement, actively engaged learners, mutual respect, shared knowledge, pursuit of new skills and capabilities, collaborative learning, willingness to take action, a team commitment to data-driven continuous improvement, and tangible results.

MISSION STATEMENT

We Educate for Excellence ... Empowering all students to achieve their educational goals, to direct their lives, and to contribute to society.

President Carol Winter: We have reached a tentative agreement after much discussion. This agreement will be voted on by the membership likely next Monday. The teachers will receive copies of that agreement sometime this week, so we will not release details until our teachers have had the opportunity to look over that agreement. From the Board's standpoint and the WTA, everyone is relieved we can move forward and put our focus back on our students and move beyond the stress of being in a disagreement.

We have been working on our strategic plan for over a year. Part of that is looking at facilities. We'll be discussing moving forward on a no new millage bond issue that could be placed on the November ballot. The bond would address our aging elementary schools. It's an opportunity that comes along once in a generation.

I hope we did a good job keeping the resolution for Mr. Pepera a secret.

Joe Kraft: I've had the good fortune to work closely with Mr. Pepera over the years on the bond issue to build new schools. He seems to know everyone in the business. They certainly know him. We know he's great. Thanks for serving the district and for all you've done to make our district great.

John Finucane: I learned a lot about school finance from Mark, but I also learned there is a lot more to learn. You've always been very open, easy to get ahold of, very responsive and able to explain things. Sorry to see you leave. Our loss is Brunswick's gain. Anyone on the board truly appreciates the commitment you've made to the organization for a lot of years.

Barb Leszynski: This is my fifth year on the board. When I first started I called Mark all the time. I just appreciate you answered all the questions I had and didn't make me feel like I should have known it.

Bob Stoll: Appreciate your work in the area of finance. You brought high quality transparency to the district. You've set the bar high. You will be missed.

Carol Winter: You never make a person feel like they should already know that. That's huge. It takes years to become grounded in this. I feel like I know so much more. You were very patient. You've made the district stronger. You've been with us through 6 operating levies, 2 bond issues and 1 PI levy. Your hard work has been on point with all of them.

Superintendent Geoff Palmer: I've been doing this for 13 years and had the opportunity to work with some really outstanding treasurers. Beyond a doubt you are the top as far as technical expertise and the ability you have that is so unique with someone with that expertise to present with ease that information to the community who have less experience and less of a knowledge base on school finance. Making it understandable to them. Your ability to prioritize your professional excellence and commitment to the school district with your number one priority, your family.

CFO/Treasurer Mark Pepera: Thank you for giving me this opportunity. They took a chance on me coming from a small district. I really enjoyed my time here, the citizens of Westlake. Hopefully I've made a contribution to work toward your mission of striving for excellence. We take that mission seriously. I appreciate the board's commitment and support over the years. A lot of you have been here at a lot of meetings. Appreciative of the recognition. I have a wonderful staff and couldn't do what I've been able to accomplish without them. They are the cream of the crop. My family is my first priority and no matter where I've been, they've been with me every step of the way.

HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

1. Harry Applegate: I've known Mark since the first month he started. I knew Rich McIntosh who he replaced. I know what the financial reporting had been over the years, He has taken this district from heights to heights to heights. It's all the hard work he and his staff have done to try to impart to this community what it takes to run a school district financially. I'm sad to see you go, but happy to see you move on to bigger and better things. Thank you for your time and service.

2. Rick Manaloff: Served as bond counsel to the district since Mark began. What a privilege it's been for me to work with Mark. Mark's value to the community and state is as a leader. Every year a buddy and I put on a legal update for all treasurers at OASBO's annual workshop. Every year because of Mark's stature, we always weave Mark into our legal update. This last year we did a Saturday Night Live sketch. One of the key components was celebrity Jeopardy. In our script we had 3 celebrities up there, Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump and Mark Pepera.
3. Karen Herzberger: Wish Mark on behalf of OAPSE all the best. I grew with Mark. we always talked about things and worked it out.
4. Roberta Rence: newest of the staff. Only one I can handle standing up here at this point. I am new to public accounting. I came from the private industry. This group is really going to miss you. They've worked hard for you and appreciate everything you've done for them.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Legislative Liaison/Barb Leszynski: The American Medical Association has adopted a policy to encourage later school start times to allow students to get more sleep. Calls on schools to implement middle and high school start times no earlier than 8:30am. Three charter advocacy groups issues calls for more strict guidelines. Ohio has high limits on virtual charter schools.
2. Finance/Audit Committee/John Finucane: We met earlier today to discuss our current financial situation as it relates to our bond millage expiring at the end of this year.
3. Curriculum Committee/Carol Winter: Our Title I summer reading program went well. We have a math program going on at LBMS to help prepare kids for Algebra. Our math textbooks have been ordered. Next up for review is English/Language Arts. Technology and curriculum committee for strategic plan will meet to review our latest assessment scores and next steps forward.
4. Community Outreach Committee/Joe Kraft: As the board reaches out to the community, Rotary is a group we take a seat at the table. We will hear a presentation from students who participated in Rotary Youth Leadership over the summer.

SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Approved retirement of Cheryl Bendik
- b. Approved resignations of Erin Blahnik and Julie Szucs
- c. Approved employment of summer bus aides Terry Janmey, Marsha Lesko and Linda Martin

BOARD ITEMS

1. Discussion of Phase II of Facilities Plan
 - a. John Finucane: building on what the strategic planning finance task force presented at the last meeting.
 - b. Carol Winter: task force presented pros and cons of one building v. two buildings. All 4 buildings are between 40 and 60 years old and have serious issues with HVAC and technology.

- c. Finucane: We covered a fair amount of ground in our meeting. A lot of what we were talking about has to do with the millage falling off/expiring at the end of this calendar year. 2.34 mills expiring. We're coming due to the point where we've paid off the debt on that millage. Provides us with a unique opportunity to address our facilities k-4 and permanent improvements by renewing that 2.34 mills. Net effect is no new increase in taxes but would dedicate dollars to PI and address K-4 buildings. We looked at options and cost structures. We feel confident there is one opportunity out there to work for us. We still want flexibility. Some unknowns. If we're able to have a land swap with the city, it provides opportunity for one K-4 site. If not, we'll fall back to a 2 location for K-4 facilities. It's hard to make a recommendation today on one location or two.
 - d. Mark Pepera: The Board took the first steps with paperwork filing with the state at the last meeting leading to a potential November ballot issue. The board needs to take two separate actions -- it doesn't bind the board in any way or places anything on the ballot. Second meeting is a definitive decision and that action will mean filing paperwork by Aug. 2 to actually place something on the ballot.
 - e. Joe Kraft: These suggestions go back to 20/20. These are not new issues. These have been goals of the community for some time. I think we should consider the polling and data presented a couple of meetings ago. The issues we present tonight will cover all of that. We know what we want to do and we have specific plans, but some of the projects we're considering with the city, we want to give the community a number of concrete options.
 - f. Pepera: Looked at 2.43 mills available to work with. Concept is a combination to address capital needs (Phase II) as well as establish a permanent improvement continuing revenue stream. Three concepts:
 - i. \$33.7 million to \$37.8 million. Millage amounts for bond portion for each in 1.4 mill range. Balance would be a PI of 1 mill.
 - g. Finucane: hoping to present one definitive number and structure. Since there are some moving pieces with the city, we are going to recommend 3 resolutions for consideration. Those will encompass the 2.43 mills, just indifferent pieces. Only difference of 3 is dollar amounts and based on multiple or single locations. Want to have flexibility.
 - h. Superintendent Palmer: we've had ongoing discussions with the city finding a productive way to use city and school district assets in the best interest of our community. Given some questions not quite wrapped up, the flexibility of adopting three independent resolutions gives us the ability to move forward. This opportunity is unique to be able to address our schools and our city's recreation needs that would not increase taxes. Optimistic of getting to this process in the coming weeks so we can really serve the citizens of Westlake with a school district and city working together.
2. Approved 3 resolutions to potentially place a bond issue on the November ballot
- a. One new elementary school, one site: \$33.633 million, + 1 mill Permanent Improvement levy

- b. Two elementary neighborhood school sites: \$37.567 million + 1 mill permanent improvement levy.
 - c. Two new elementary schools grade level: \$37.798 million + 1 mill permanent improvement levy.
 - d. John Finucane: This board and previous boards have taken a lot of flak over the years because of no dedicated revenue stream to permanent improvements.
 - e. Carol Winter: We are among the few districts in Ohio without a PI levy. It puts us in a much better position.
3. Approved CFO/Treasurer's bond

The Board adjourned to executive session to discuss potential sale/acquisition of property and employment and compensation of employees. No action was taken.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: The next meeting of the Board is Monday, July 25, 6pm, at Parkside.

For more detailed information on these items, visit

<http://beta.westlake.k12.oh.us/boe/meetingschedule/default.aspx>